

# SEE NL

**Van Diem's Tulipani**  
*world premieres at TIFF*

*Dutch master:*  
**Hoyte van Hoytema**

*Bringing Dunkirk*  
**to Holland**

**Antoniak and Koole**  
*head for Toronto*

**Rifka Lodeizen**  
*times two at TIFF*



Issue #28 August 2017 Venice / TIFF  
San Sebastian / Netherlands Film Festival

**NL FILM  
FONDS**



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NL FILM  
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**Cover: Tulipani** ◊ Mike van Diem **See page 18**



*“The Dutch ‘me’ became very different from the Polish version of me”*

Photo: Olaf Tryzna



**Urszula Antoniak acknowledges that her new feature, *Beyond Words*, about a successful young Polish lawyer living in Berlin, has a strong autobiographical undertow, writes Geoffrey Macnab.**

Like the lawyer in the film, selected for San Sebastian and TIFF Contemporary World Cinema, Antoniak left her homeland to head west. She too has become very successful with a string of award-winning features behind her (*Code Blue*, *Nothing Personal*) that have screened at numerous international festivals and sold to many countries.

In *Beyond Words*, supported by the Netherlands Film Fund, the lawyer is visited by his father, but despite their blood ties, it’s as if the two men are living in different worlds. They struggle to relate to one another. “This is like the primal scene for any immigrant, when you are visited by your parents from the old country,” Antoniak explains of the new raw feelings her film exposes. An immigrant, she continues, becomes someone else, a different version of the person who left home.

# An immigrant’s tale

Antoniak was in her early 20s when she came to The Netherlands in the late 1980s, even though she was still enrolled at film school in Katowice. “It was pretty obvious,” she responds when asked why she decided to build herself a new life away from Poland. “I just couldn’t stand the [political] climate there. It was communism still, a bastard version of communism – the last years of a system that everybody knows is not working.” Her father was a communist and her mother was in Solidarity. That meant the tensions in the country as a whole were reflected in her own home. “There were quarrels on a daily basis.”

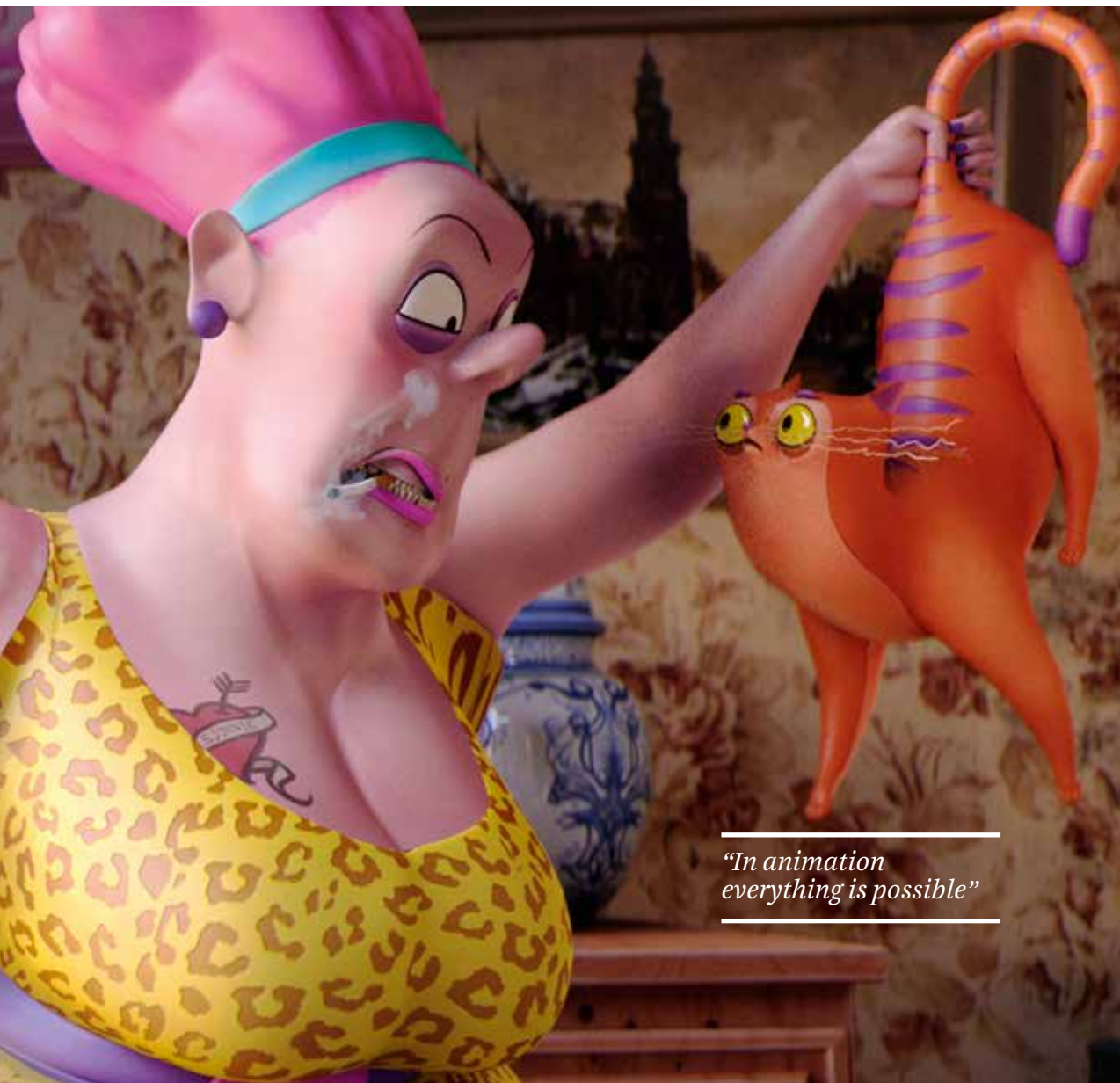
Coming to The Netherlands, Antoniak relished the blast of freedom. She could buy whatever books and music she wanted – or was able to afford. Nothing was banned. If she wanted to read Celine’s *Journey To The End Of The Night*, nobody was going to stop her. She could step on a train to Paris without any interference. “It was a life free of politics.”

Eventually, Antoniak enrolled in film school in The Netherlands. The approach was very different from that in Poland and altogether more pragmatic. Whereas Polish students were all talking about the vision and beauty of Tarkovsky from the day they arrived, the Dutch were far more focused on simply mastering their craft. “The new version of me, the Dutch ‘me’, was very different from the Polish version,” she jokes.

Antoniak first had the idea for *Beyond Words* a decade ago. She intended to shoot it in The Netherlands and had even lined up a Dutch-Polish actor to play the lead. In the event, she couldn’t raise the financing. Now, ten years later, she has completed the project – but has shot it in Germany. The film stars Jakub Gierszał, a charismatic young Polish actor who was born in Cracow but grew up between Germany and Poland. The lawyer’s father is played by Andrzej Chyra, a hugely respected cinema and stage actor.

In the decade since she first wrote the screenplay for *Beyond Words*, the tone of the project has changed. Originally, it had a ‘feelgood’ factor. Now, it is much more harrowing in its depiction of the immigrant’s situation. The young lawyer is highly successful but he has had to become ‘a bit of an actor, a shape shifter,’ and his connection with his father has become very strained.

Antoniak’s own relationship with her homeland has also changed. The Law And Justice Party is now in government and, to her dismay, the country has swung to the right. “What is in Poland now is beyond words. The conflict there is just the tip of the iceberg of the many conflicts of the past that were never resolved. Politically, people are scared. They don’t know what the future will bring. Whenever I go to Poland, I am sad, I am angry and I feel helpless. So I return to Amsterdam, where I belong.”



*"In animation everything is possible"*

**Director & script:** Jamille van Wijngaarden  
**Production:** Keplerfilm (NL) **Festival distribution:** Some Shorts

## Picture purrfect



Jamille van Wijngaarden

**She may be better known as a live action director but Jamille van Wijngaarden's animation debut *Catastrophe*, backed by the Film Fund's Ultrakort scheme, has been selected for Toronto Short Cuts Competition. She talks to Nick Cunningham.**

The idea for the animated *Catastrophe* only came to Jamille van Wijngaarden in August 2016. A mere year later her madcap and audacious 2-minute short film world premieres in Toronto. As reminiscent of *3D Spongebob* as it is the classics of Tex Avery and Chuck Jones, her story of a cat who falls in love with a caged bird seeks to question our stereotypical perceptions of standard feline/avian relationships. In the process, much mayhem and violence ensues and, as happens in such circumstances, a grand piano tethered to a rope ably serves to dispatch one of the animated protagonists to the afterlife.

"As this was my first animation I was curious about how to write a script for it, and how to direct it," comments Van Wijngaarden. "That was new for me. Normally in my live-action films I like to create

a larger than life world with larger than life characters. And I like comedy, especially dark comedy, so it was a bit logical. In animation everything is possible, so I wanted to go further than you can in a live action film. For me that was the most fun part, and I could definitely explore the darkest depths of my humour."

After receiving Film Fund support, Van Wijngaarden worked on character design and blocking in November 2016 and modeling in January 2017 before three weeks of intense and very detailed animation. "The difficult part for me was the blocking, when your characters are pre-defined as blocks. It was difficult to see their eventual movements, how fast they walk, how fast they talk, but I had a great team of animators and post-production producers around me who got me through it all and helped me with all the key decisions."

"Animation was a whole new process for me," she adds, "Normally you work with actors and you are confident you will find your way on the set and in the editing. But in animation you have to make a lot of important decisions beforehand, such as how long this shot should be in the edit, as every frame costs extra time and extra money in the end."

The Ultrakort scheme, run by the Film Fund, Fonds 21 and Pathé, invests a total of €200,000 per year in four 2-minute animations.

Each film is screened before a major release at Pathé cinemas across The Netherlands. *Catastrophe* will play before *Spiderman Homecoming*. Past Ultrakort-funded films include the Academy Award shortlisted film *A Single Life* by Job Joris and Marieke.

"We are very proud that one of the short animation films, made within our Ultrakort programme is selected for TIFF," enthuses Dorien van de Pas, head of New Screen NL at The Netherlands Film Fund. "It is a project made by Kepler Film, a young and ambitious team, coming from fiction to animation for the first time. Together with Storm Postproduction, their technical partner, they succeeded in making a very energetic, vivid and adventurous trip set in one room – and played within a very short period of time. They even made it in 3D, the first time for a film in this programme. Through the initiative with Pathé these shorts are able to reach out to large audiences."

A busy commercials director, Van Wijngaarden is also working on a 45-minute screenplay for Kepler Film (working title: *Tarantula*) that she hope will receive One Night Stand backing from the Film Fund [and other partners] for broadcast in 2018. "It was a such a great process working on an animation film, so I would definitely want to work on another in the future," she underlines. "I would also like to make a feature that combines live action with animation."

# Puppy love



**Geoffrey Macnab talks to Ben Brand about his inflammatory new film which brilliantly chronicles and dissects our online digital age.**

It was a video posted on the web in 2010 that caused instant outrage. A teenage girl was shown on camera tossing live puppies into the river. The online community reacted with disgust. "Find this dumb little bitch and throw her into a river," was the response from viewers as the video went viral.

Young director Ben Brand saw it and followed the subsequent controversy. As the hunt began in earnest, the web community tried to work out where the girl was from. Was she Swedish or American or Bosnian? No-one was quite sure. An old woman came forward, claiming to have rescued puppies from the river. Then the girl's family posted another video apologising for her actions and explaining that the puppies were sick.

Gradually, Brand began to think about making a feature film which would take the incident as a starting point. He met producers Jeroen

Beker and Sabine Veenendaal who eventually took the film to Submarine.

The screenplay for *Find This Dumb Little Bitch...* was developed by Brand and his co-writer Ilse Ott at the Binger Filmlab (now closed). They wanted to explore just why the girl had behaved with what seemed like wanton cruelty. In their film, Remco (15), his father and his younger sister Lizzy (13) make money by selling puppies that they've illegally imported. Remco, lonely and unhappy and desperate to make friends, is the one who posts the fateful video of his sister.

Brand recreated a near identical version of the original video posted online, with the key difference that the girl wasn't throwing a real puppy into the water. He was intrigued as to whether a cinema audience would react with the same disgust and hostility as those who had watched the original film online. The film, developed within De Oversteek scheme, was made for TV but it was always the director's hope that it would find a cinema audience elsewhere. It was broadcast earlier this year in The Netherlands and is now set to have a long festival life with slots already confirmed at various autumn events.

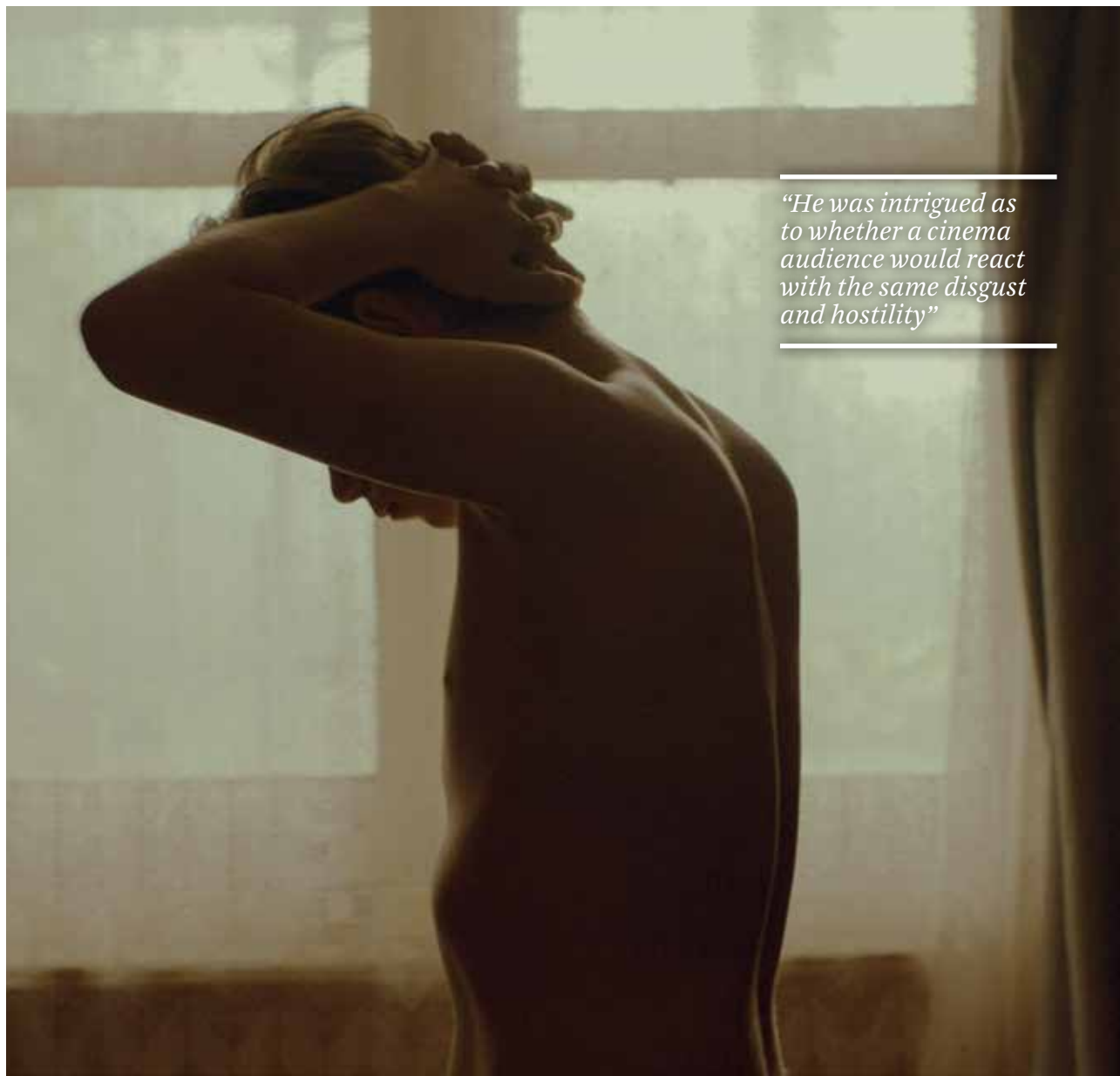
"When we started developing this project, more and more of these kind of stories surfaced," says Brand, pointing out one reason why festivals were so keen to have the film. There were many other

examples of people whose lives were thrown into turmoil because of videos they had uploaded.

The director explains that the film is as much a coming of age story as it is a morality tale about the dangers of posting something on the internet. "I just had a private screening in Paris. After it, a lot of people came to me and said this really reminds me of their own youth. This, for me, is one of the most important themes of the film... growing up." He cites Andrea Arnold's work, especially *Fish Tank*, as an inspiration. Brand is also a big fan of Nicolas Winding Refn's raw and abrasive trilogy of *Pusher* films. He shot in freewheeling, improvisatory fashion. Most of the young cast had never acted before (although Nino den Brave, who played Remco, had previously appeared in movies).

*Find This Dumb Little Bitch...* isn't intended to be "a hard, nasty, depressing film." There is humour and redemption thrown into the mix too. The director isn't trying to excuse the behaviour of the girl who threw the puppies in the river or to judge her, but he is asking questions about why she did it and how she ended up becoming such a pariah. Everyone tends to do stupid things in their youth. If they're lucky, they are given the chance to learn from their mistakes. That doesn't happen, though, if the mistakes are uploaded and preserved for everyone to gawp at on the internet. "It harms you for the rest of your life," warns Brand.

## Warsaw International Film Festival *Find This Dumb Little Bitch and Throw Her into the River* ◊ Ben Brand



*"He was intrigued as to whether a cinema audience would react with the same disgust and hostility"*

**Director:** Ben Brand **Script:** Ilse Ott, Ben Brand **Production:** Submarine Film



*“Producer, director, script. If the holy trinity makes sense we pretty much always know it will work”*

**Oblivion Verses** ◊ **Director:** Alireza Khatami **Script:** Alireza Khatami, Dominique Welinski, René Ballesteros **Production:** House on Fire (FR) **Co-Production:** Lemming Film (NL) – Leontine Petit, Eva Eisenloeffel, Endorphine Production (DE), Quijote Films (CL) **Sales:** Urban Distribution International

# Better together



**Lemming Film is in the co-pro ascendant again with two films at Toronto/Venice 2017. SEE NL speaks to CEO Leontine Petit and producer Eva Eisenloeffel.**

When asked to list the features of a successful co-pro in order of priority, the pair answer without hesitation. First comes the producer (one whom the company has known for a long time or is confident of having a long term future relationship with), then the director and finally the script.

“This was the case with *In the Fog* (Sergei Loznitsa) or *Vivan las Antipodas* (Victor Kossakovsky),” Petit stresses, although she could have just as easily cited Yorgos Lanthimos’ *The Lobster*, the upcoming *Monos* (Alejandro Landes, Alexis dos Santos) or a host of other co-productions. “Producer, director, script. If the holy trinity makes sense we pretty much always know it will work. But I must stress, of course, that we always keep our minds open and are not locked just into existing collaborations.”

In Lucrecia Martel’s *Zama*, co-produced with the Argentinian Rei Cine and made with Film Fund support,

an officer of the Spanish Crown waits for a letter from the King granting him promotion, but the letter never arrives, so he therefore decides to join a hunt to find both a dangerous bandit and his own sense of destiny... The film world-premieres at Venice before screening in TIFF Masters.

Rei Cine and Lemming Film previously co-produced on Jasmin López’s *Leones* (2013). “That was great, and we have been talking about when to work together again ever since. Benjamin Domenech (Rei Cine) told me about his collaboration with Lucrecia, whose work we all love, and then it all fell together. It is a fantastic project script-wise and we found a good way for it to have serious Dutch involvement,” says Eisenloeffel. Director Martel came to The Netherlands with her DOP Rui Poças for the grading. In addition the visual effects on the period film were created in post-production by Filmmore in The Netherlands. Filmfreak will handle the Dutch release.

In Alireza Khatami’s *Oblivion Verses*, selected for Venice Orizzonti Competition and TIFF Discovery, an elderly caretaker of a remote morgue discovers the body of an unknown young woman. Evoking memories of personal loss, he embarks on a magical odyssey to give her a proper burial with the help of a mystic gravedigger, an old woman searching for her long-lost daughter and a hearse driver tormented by his past. The film is produced by House on Fire (France), whose Fred Bellaïche

is a friend and colleague of Lemming founder Petit – they met over a decade ago at ACE. Bellaïche admired director Khatami and the script, and wanted the film to be co-financed by The Netherlands. This was possible via Lemming’s successful application for €50,000 HBF+NFF funding. “Through this type of collaboration there is always exchange of experience and advice between producers – with the Hubert Bals Fund we could follow exactly what the production needed without necessarily having to ensure technical Dutch involvement,” says Petit.

Lemming’s influence on a film is never solely financial. “We always read and discuss the script at an early stage before we apply to the Film Fund, and mostly there is a period of re-writing before we apply – and then, when we watch the edits, we get together to suggest improvements,” Petit comments. “Also, when the DOP comes from The Netherlands that will mean there is already a very strong Dutch creative involvement. It is the same with editing or grading.”

“However much these projects may benefit us, we are always proud that the main producer allows us to join the film as these co-productions are made by great teams that we love and respect,” Petit makes clear. “We support the main producer however we can. If they feel there is something that they want or need in order to get the film made, then we are always determined to help.”

**Nick Cunningham**



Samuel L. Jackson in Amsterdam in  
*The Hitman's Bodyguard*  
Supported by NL Film Production Incentive  
Still: Patrick Hughes

# More vroom

**The much lauded Netherlands Film Production Incentive, which launched Summer 2014, may prove even more attractive to Dutch and international producers later this year after the launch of a pilot rebate scheme for high-end TV drama, documentary and animation series. Additionally, the cash rebate for film projects will increase up to 35%. Film Fund CEO Doreen Boonekamp tells all to Nick Cunningham.**

The redrawing of the Production Incentive's remit comes in response to industry demand, both within and beyond Dutch borders. When, earlier this year, a report on the Incentive's results since its 2014 launch was published, it was obvious that news of its effectiveness had spread, both geographically and to the broadcast sectors.

"You can tell from the share of international productions that came to produce here, which went from 10% in 2014 to 26% in 2016. From the start we also had numerous requests from foreign and national producers if there are possibilities to apply for TV series, so we always knew that there was a strong interest in it," Boonekamp stresses.

"So now it is time to catch up with territories like Germany or the UK that have extended their incentive schemes, particularly regarding high-end TV series, which are of increasingly high interest to both professionals and audiences," she adds.

The first deadline for TV series-oriented applications (offering up to 30% cash rebate on Dutch production spent) will be set for early November 2017, with results to be announced later in December. Another three deadlines will be scheduled in 2018. The total amount earmarked for cash rebates for TV series will be €10 million.

The Fund also responded to pleas from the local and international industries to raise the cash rebate allocated per project, currently capped at €1 million. This will rise to €1.5 million. The scheme will also open up for features with a production budget of 600,000 euro

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*"The international competitiveness of The Netherlands is further boosted by modifying the scheme"*

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or more (currently only features with a minimum budget of €1 million can qualify).

"Moreover when you spend a certain level on digital production costs for film productions, or if no other public funding from the Netherlands is part of the financing plan, producers can now get up to 35% cash rebate," Boonekamp adds.

Between July 2014 and the end of 2016, 181 films benefitted from Production Incentive rebates.

This amounted to €42 million in rebates, which equated to €199 million in production expenditure in The Netherlands. Put simply, every euro granted by the Incentive Scheme converted to Dutch spend of €4.77. What's more, the Incentive was shown to generate rising confidence among Dutch production entrepreneurs, and to boost expectations of growth within employment and economic activity.

In 2017 a further 36 projects have so far received rebate support, amounting to more than €9.6 million. These productions are expected to generate a further €43+ million in production spend.

International productions such as *Dunkirk* by Christopher Nolan and *Brimstone* by Martin Koolhoven have received Incentive support in the past. The latest round saw the first cash rebate granted to an international co-production between China and The Netherlands: *Dead & Beautiful* by director David Verbeek.

"This was, of course, one of the major aims of the scheme, to increase the attractiveness of the Netherlands to international producers to come make their films here with Dutch partners, and to make use of the excellent facilities and the professionals based here. The international competitiveness of The Netherlands is further boosted by modifying the scheme," Boonekamp affirms.



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*“Their faces are like landscapes in which it storms, and then the sun comes out”*

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**Director:** Boudewijn Koole **Script:** Jolein Laarman **Production:** The Film Kitchen (NL)  
**Co-Production:** Sweet Films (NO) **Sales:** Pluto Film

# The ice queen cometh



**You won't find many films made in a more remote setting than Boudewijn Koole's *Disappearance*, selected for TIFF Contemporary World Cinema, writes Geoffrey Macnab.**

Koole shot his enigmatic drama in Finnmark in Norway, a snowbound wilderness where (as the director puts it) “you can walk for 200km without a road... it's one of the only places in Europe where you can go to and walk away from the world and disappear.”

Roos (Rifka Lodeizen) arrives in this frozen wilderness to visit her mother (Elsie de Brauw). There is tension between the women and Roos has some very disturbing news to share.

The initial inspiration for *Disappearance*, produced by The Film Kitchen with Film Fund support, came after Koole came across *In The Shadow Of Things*, a book and exhibition by photographer Léonie Hampton. This chronicled the year that Hampton spent with her mother. Koole was fascinated both by the ‘super intimacy’ of the pictures and by the moments they captured. These weren't conventional family

pictures, celebrating birthdays or anniversaries. Instead, her lens was turned on seemingly ‘ordinary’ moments.

There is very little that could be described as ‘ordinary’ about *Disappearance*. This is a film in which death is a constant and looming presence. Roos is an impulsive and passionate woman. We see her riding on a dog sleigh, fishing through a hole in the ice, dancing in the snow, having sex. She also spends time with her precocious teenage brother in saunas or beneath frozen waterfalls. She is relishing and enjoying every-day moments but is all too aware that these moments won't last.

Koole worked on the screenplay with Jolein Laarman, who also co-scripted the director's 2012 feature *Kauwboy*. They went together to a house in Sweden to complete the script. In creating the character of Roos, Laarman drew on her own experiences as a leukaemia survivor. She had kept diaries during her illness and acknowledged there were moments when she just wanted to disappear. She'd be in a group with her friends and family and would suddenly have the feeling that she was apart from them; that they were fine without her and it was time for her to go.

Growing up in a Protestant tradition in The Netherlands, Koole remembers death being treated in a very matter of fact fashion. Funerals would never last long, displays of

emotion would be suppressed and the mourners would get on with their lives as soon as possible. That has changed. Now, when someone dies, there is likely to be wine and speeches. People will give full vent to their grief.

In the film, the mother is a brilliant concert pianist. That is one reason why there is a distance between her and her daughter. Dedicated to her art, she didn't always have the time to be a good parent.

Koole describes his two leads, Lodeizen and de Brauw, as his favourites among Dutch actresses. Their faces, he suggests, are “landscapes in which it storms, and then the sun comes out.” You can read the drama in their expressions, regardless of what is written in the script.

There is something very seductive about the icy world in which Roos finds herself. As Koole points out, visitors to the region are frequently warned that freezing to death is not painful. Sometimes, bodies are found of people who've undressed because it felt so warm.

“There are all sorts of warnings to keep your feet warm, to keep your hands warm. You don't feel it when your feet freeze. It starts to be nice, even. You lose a bit of energy and you start to fall asleep. Traditional stories warn you about the ice queen who comes when you fall asleep. She seduces you... if you go with her, you will die. You've got to stay awake, to start walking...”



# Heading north



Marleen Jonkman

**Debutant Marleen Jonkman's *Messi and Maud* (Dutch title: *La Holandesa*), selected for TIFF Discovery, is made from a personal script by first-timer Daan Gielis. The director talks to Nick Cunningham.**

It is rare to find a film in which the inability to bear a child is presented with such raw and uncompromising intensity. But *Messi and Maud* is such a film, loosely charting screenwriter Gielis' existential (and solo) odyssey from the southern tip of Chile to its north, little by little coming to terms with the prospect of a childless future.

As soon as director Jonkman read the script she understood the emotional dilemma at its core, and wanted to be involved. "I am 37 now and I would love to be a mother. I recognize this immense desire that's not fulfilled," she says. "It can be really hard to accept that it's something you cannot control and I can easily imagine it becomes an obsession."

The film stars Rifka Lodeizen as Maud who, while on a hiking holiday in Chile, walks away from

her partner Frank. She decides to head to the warmer north by any means necessary, whether by ferry, bus or hitch-hiking. En route she meets a small boy nicknamed Messi whom she liberates from a drunken and violent father. Together they develop a delicate and vital surrogate mother/son relationship which fortifies them against the enormous emotional upheavals they will experience before the film's end. The film is supported by the Netherland Film Fund and is the first feature from Danielle Guirguis' Smarthouse Films.

"Rifka is an emotionally intelligent and intuitive actor – in the casting she was instantly Maud. She's a very analytical person, who wants to understand every word in the screenplay, but when she plays, she stops thinking and becomes super vulnerable and intuitive," comments Jonkman of her main cast.

"I was also very lucky to finally find Cristóbal, the boy who plays Messi. Other boys were too sweet, too shy or too ambitious. Cristóbal was the opposite. A street-wise kid, without much discipline, but with a great sense of drama. He easily understood what he was playing. It all starts with casting the right people to be able to create such a relationship."

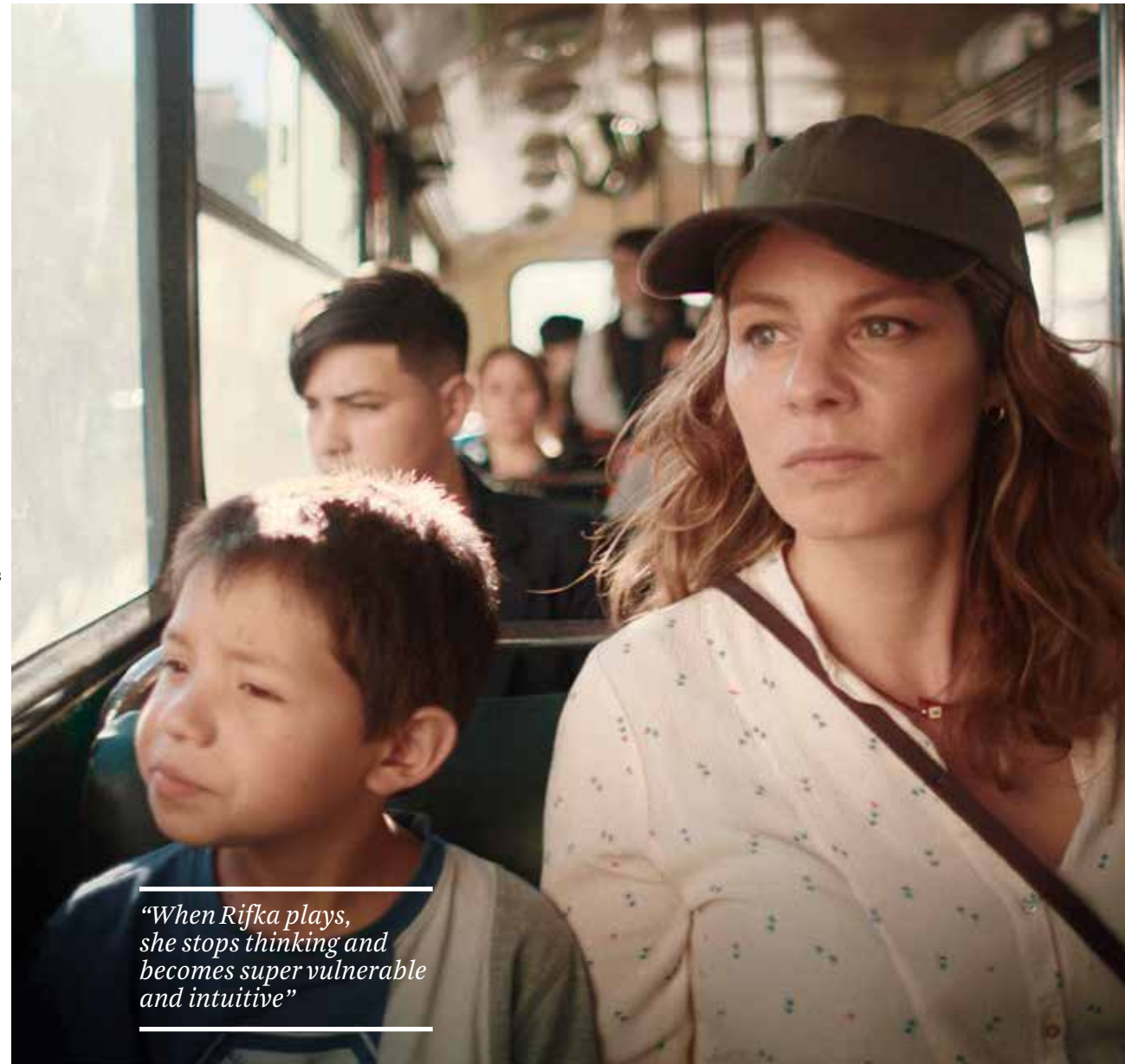
Jonkman had to adapt early to the differences in approach of her Dutch and Chilean crews. "Not only were we sometimes lost in translation [she initially found Chilean Spanish almost impenetrable], we had

different ways of working. We Dutch wanted to be prepared and tried to make endless breakdown sheets, but the Chilean crew really dared to improvise and trust that everything would be fine. That was very inspiring. We shot with a very small crew, without light, wardrobe and art department, and that created a lot of flexibility and freedom to improvise with the actors. I really enjoyed that way of working, to let go of control and to really trust in the moment."

Surely a road-movie that entails a search for emotional equilibrium could be filmed anywhere, and certainly not distant South America. Not so, says Jonkman. The dramatic landscapes and the shift from the freezing Patagonian climes to Chile's near-equatorial north play as metaphor for Maud's emotional journey, she stresses. "Nature helps her to heal and to let go, it's almost like a character in this film. I think that was something that Daan experienced herself on this trip, and it all came together in her idea to make a film. I also went there alone to make this 4500 km journey, to experience what the character of Maud is going through. Also, there is a difference in mentality between Dutch and Chilean people, and all her encounters help her to let go."

"For me it is not just a film about wanting to have a child or letting go of that desire. It isn't just about children, it's a spiritual journey about loss and love," Jonkman concludes.

Toronto International Film Festival  
*Messi and Maud* ◊ Marleen Jonkman **tiff**



*"When Rifka plays, she stops thinking and becomes super vulnerable and intuitive"*

**Director:** Marleen Jonkman **Script:** Daan Gielis **Production:** Smarthouse Films (NL) **Co-Production:** FATT Productions (NL), Leitwolf TV-und Filmproduktion (DE)



*“the various storytellers of this colourful history each have their own version of the truth”*

**Director:** Mike van Diem **Script:** Peter van Wijk  
**Production:** FATT Productions (NL)  
**Co-Production:** Don Carmody Productions (CA), Draka Productions (IT), Stemo  
**Production (IT) Sales:** Atlas Film

# Catching tulip fever



Mike van Diem

**Academy Award-winning Mike van Diem’s latest opus *Tulipani, Love, Honour and a Bicycle*, selected for TIFF and The Netherlands Film Festival (opening film) is a lavish, romantic tragi-comedy that sees a Dutch farmer leave behind his flooded homeland for the warmth of southern Italy. Nick Cunningham reports.**

Gauke is a farmer who loves his tulips, but after the biblical flood of 1953 that claimed hundreds of lives, he reckons that enough is enough and sets forth on a bicycle across Europe to the warmer climate of Puglia, carrying nothing other than a pocketful of tulip bulbs.

Before he sets off, however, he meets the mute yet alluring Ria. Their brief union produces a child, Anna. Ria joins Gauke nine months later and, together, they create a swathe of beautiful and colourful tulip fields. But a local Mafioso has his eye on Gauke’s profits, and after a very public altercation, Gauke disappears... Thirty years later, an Italian police inspector (played by leading actor Giancarlo Giannini) attempts to unravel the mystery of

Gauke’s disappearance and with the help of the grown-up Anna, who is recently returned from Canada, he discovers what really happened.

The film, directed by Mike van Diem (*Character*) was originally slated to be made by another Dutch Oscar winner, Marleen Gorris (*Antonia’s Line*), but she had to leave the production in October 2015. Even though some scenes had been shot, Van Diem was unable to join the production until November 2016. However, in the intervening period he was able to take a fresh look at Peter van Wijk’s original screenplay and to apply amendments.

“The story is about a romantic Dutch farmer who cycles to Southern Italy and grows into a mythic, living legend,” Van Diem underlines. “I’ve interpreted that myth in a more exaggerated and fairytale way than was originally intended, and also made his love life a little more complicated. But my most important contribution was probably how the various storytellers of this colourful history each have their own version of the truth, and how they cross each other in humorous ways. The role of Giancarlo Giannini – the policeman who must discover the truth behind it all – was very small in the original story. Now, he is the spider in the center of the web, and his scenes form the ‘red thread’ in the film.”

Van Diem sensed an initial reticence on Giannini’s part to engage fully within the production, but the

Italian star, who played opposite Daniel Craig in the *Casino Royale* and *Quantum of Solace*, was soon impressed by the complexity of the role he was asked to play. “[At first] he thought he’d have to – yet again – go through the usual routine of playing the stereotypical Italian cop. But by the afternoon, he began to realize that not only the film, but his role, was a lot more playful and intelligent than he was used to. There was more asked of him than usual, and he liked that. The next day, he enthusiastically pulled out all the stops, and kept it up until the last moment, pulling out the best from his co-stars too; a fantastic experience for everyone involved.”

*“Giancarlo Giannini is the spider in the center of the web”*

Dutch actor Gijs Naber puts in a muscular, bravura performance as farmer Gauke and debutante Anneke Sluifers is mesmerizing as Ria, whom the Puglian residents assume to be a latter-day Madonna. The role of the older Anna is played by Ksenia Solo (*Black Swan, Lost Girl*). “Gijs was very good. And then there’s Anneke, who plays his wife in her debut, an amazing arrival on the big screen. She’s sure to make an impression.”

*Tulipani* is an expansive co-production that bridges The Netherlands (Film Fund and Production Incentive support), Italy and Canada. It invokes the luscious and

## Catching tulip fever

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romantic cinema of Giuseppe Tornatore (*Cinema Paradiso*) and Michael Radford (*Il Postino*) and displays a flair for violent pastiche worthy of Tarantino. Gauke himself is reminiscent of the idealistic Gérard Depardieu in Claude Berri's *Jean de Florette*.

The scenes of countless rows of tulips in the fields outside Puglia are breathtaking and involved the transport and planting of 14,000 flowers. "All those beautiful, colourful tulips in the midst of the grey-green of the olive trees and the Italian landscape. The magic worked," comments production designer Harry Ammerlaan.

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*"Directing a film is a little like being the father of a very large family"*

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What's more, the film is shot in three languages, Dutch, English and Italian. Did Van Diem encounter any problems directing Italian cast and crew?

"My Italian is absolutely terrible," the director admits. "I can say to an Italian actor: 'A little to the left, or to the right', or 'With a little more emotion...'. But that's my limit. Even so, communication was good. I don't normally find what an actor says as important as how he says it. Of course, Italian sounds beautiful, and I had a beautiful collection of voices, so during all the great fight

scenes, I used big gestures to indicate which sounds and volumes I wanted to hear, more like a conductor than a director, actually. That worked pretty well. Also, a couple of the Italian actors spoke decent English. Then, if it was still too complicated, we were lucky enough to be able to send in Annemarie van de Mond, the directing assistant who had also worked on the first shoot, and was fluent in Italian."

Despite winning the Academy Award for his debut feature, Mike van Diem is not the most prolific of feature film directors. It took him sixteen years to make a second film after his much-lauded *Character*. The romcom thriller *The Surprise* (2015) starred Jan Decleir and won two Golden Calves, the top prizes in Dutch cinema. What is just as surprising is Van Diem's delivery of *Tulipani* a mere two years later.

"That's right, I really enjoyed working on *The Surprise*," he stresses. "When you're directing a film, it's a little like being the father of a very large family, and I realized that, in the intervening years, I'd especially missed that congenial, social aspect of filmmaking. Right after *The Surprise*, I was ready for another film."

"Then when I was called about directing *Tulipani*, I thought this will be an awful job, working in Southern Italy," the director jokes. "But also a chance for a unique adventure."

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*Dutch actor Gijs Naber puts in a muscular, bravura performance*

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## Profile Hoyte van Hoytema, DOP



Hoyte van Hoytema (left) with director Christopher Nolan

*“Working with all these incredible directors I learned that being a DOP is a very specific and complex profession in its own right”*

# High flying Dutchman

**Right now, Hoyte van Hoytema is probably The Netherlands’ greatest film export, and the go-to DOP for many of the world’s leading filmmakers. Geoffrey Macnab talks to him about his work on Christopher Nolan’s *Dunkirk*.**

The Dunkirk evacuation in the summer of 1940 wasn’t just a vaguely remembered episode for Dutch cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema. Like other events in the Second World War, it had a very personal resonance for him.

“My grandfather was a Polish Jew who came to The Netherlands during The Second World War. He was a lieutenant in the war; fought in Italy, England; participated in D-Day, France, Belgium and The Netherlands. He was given the Leopold Order (highest military order in Belgium) for his heroism during the war, yet he lost almost all of his family left in Poland by execution or in the concentration camps. So yes, the Second World War has always been an overlaying theme in our family and deeply shaped the way we look into this world.”

Now, Van Hoytema is receiving hugely enthusiastic reviews for his work on Christopher Nolan’s new epic, *Dunkirk*. The cinematographer is responsible for a large part of the movie coming to shoot in The Netherlands. Right from the outset, Nolan had been determined to shoot ‘in real water, with real set pieces and real waves’. At first, he

wanted to film on the English Channel itself. However, he quickly realised that shooting on the open sea would be very unpredictable and would force him to rely heavily on CGI (“which we didn’t want at all,” Van Hoytema underlines).

It was at this point that the DOP’s summers spent growing up in The Netherlands became so useful. He used to go sailing on the IJsselmeer, the huge fresh water lake, and suggested this could be a place for the movie to shoot. “Visually it had the right feel, and the limited depth would enable us to anchor set pieces to the sea bottom... generally it was a much more workable location, but still looking like the real thing.”

The partnership with Nolan began after Nolan’s then regular DOP Wally Pfister went off to direct his own movies. “Things just clicked,” he remembers. “We had similar ideas about how to use the medium, how to relate to the visual storytelling. Also we had a shared love for film and for wanting to do things in camera as opposed to using CGI. We started working together and things just came naturally and effortlessly, which is a good thing in the stressful and complex environment of making a film.”

To prepare for *Interstellar*, the first movie he did with Nolan, Van Hoytema took a crash course in science. This was a story which involved astronauts travelling through a wormhole in space as they tried to locate a new home for

humanity. It involved time travel. The plot may have sounded fantastical but it was rooted in advanced astrophysics. The physics of kinetics, as well as light and time are all intertwined into the visual storytelling. “Trying to understand the science was a big motor behind the way we would light and shoot what we were trying to suggest.”

*Dunkirk* was equally gruelling but in a very different way. Nolan took a hyper-real approach to recreating episodes from early in WW2. Almost every technical idea was original and custom-made for the film. “We had to invent and build a lot of hardware. Things like rigs to enable heavy IMAX cameras to be mounted on Spitfires and mounts to film warplanes engaging in dogfights from the other planes,” Van Hoytema explains. “We developed lenses that could look around corners.”

The filmmakers were able to use the huge IMAX camera with the same flexibility and invention as if it was a tiny Go Pro camera hidden away inside the tiny cockpit of a fighter plane. They built houses in order to be able to dip the cameras underwater while protecting them from the salt and the sand. They also built stabilising cranes so they could shoot ‘boat to boat’.

“It goes on and on,” Van Hoytema says of the way they dealt with so many daunting technical challenges. “Preparing this film was so much about coming up with mechanical or optical solutions to ▶

## High flying Dutchman

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be able to do things with the IMAX camera that we hadn't seen before; to present the viewer with the most visceral way of being there that we could think of."

For all his international success, Van Hoytema still takes his Dutch roots very seriously. He may now live and work in LA but he grew up in The Netherlands and spent all his time there until he went off to Poland to study when he was 21. His relatives are all still in Holland and he speaks affectionately of the cult comedy series, *Jiskefet*. As he says, "it's hard not to feel Dutch." His career has taken him away from The Netherlands. He had wanted to be a filmmaker as long as he could remember and tried twice to get into the Dutch Film Academy but was rejected on each occasion. He therefore headed to the celebrated Film School in Lodz, Poland.

"In retrospect I am so lucky that I ended up there," he says. "It was very unpractical, very philosophical and very artful. Not the kind of school that prepares you for finding a place in a harsh professional TV and film environment, but it shapes you as a visual artist. You come out of there with a lot of artistic confidence and a boosted level of vanity... and if you have the patience and the means to deal with the harsh reality of being unemployed for very long after, you will eventually become a full blown DOP."

Now, Van Hoytema is one of the most celebrated cinematographers

in world cinema. He has done extraordinary work on films ranging from Nolan's *Interstellar* to Spike Jonze's *Her*, David O. Russell's *The Fighter*, Sam Mendes' *Spectre* and Tomas Alfredson's *Let The Right One In*. He's shot Bond movies (*Spectre*), sports biopics (*The Fighter*), sci-fi driven epics (*Interstellar*) and, with *Dunkirk*, a war picture to end all war pictures. His approach, though, is always the same. He doesn't look at budget or genre when choosing new projects. His main concern is always with the vision behind them. "I choose my projects by director," he declares. "No other way. In that perspective I will not dismiss any genre or kind of film, but it all depends on what director is attached, and which way that director wants to go."

And, no, he doesn't have any desire to turn director himself. "Working with all these incredible directors I learned that being a DOP is a very specific and complex profession in its own right, and can take a lifetime to master," he reflects.

"What it entails is forever evolving and there are always ways to get better at it. I am not finished and bored by it. Directing is a different beast, and I think I would suck at it. Watching Chris multitask, or Sam Mendes direct actors or Spike Jonze inspire the masses is very humbling. I would never be able to come even close to what they have to offer as directors, but maybe, with a lot of hard work I might become a half good DOP one day."



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*Dunkirk* ◊ Christopher Nolan

*The Americans were very happy with the work of their Dutch partners*



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Dunkirk © Christopher Nolan

# Epic benefits

**Maarten Swart of Kaap Holland Film has worked on his fair share of kids' movies, action films and comedies. What he had never done before was oversee a US studio epic. Geoffrey Macnab reports.**

When Warner Bros decided to bring Christopher Nolan's wartime epic *Dunkirk* to shoot for four or five weeks on the Holland's vast freshwater lake, the IJsselmeer, executive producer Jake Myers immediately contacted line producer Erwin Godschalk of Dutch production outfit Kaap Holland Film, and the company's MD Maarten Swart. What the *Dunkirk* execs didn't realise was that Warner Bros already owned the company.

"They only found out afterwards!" Swart remembers. The execs were also pleasantly surprised to discover that they qualified for a €1 million cash rebate via the Production Incentive. The ongoing support of the Netherlands Film Commission proved to be an added sweetener.

*Dunkirk* set up its production offices in the small fishing village of Urk, where the Protestant inhabitants are known for being ultra-religious. "They had some concerns about shooting on Sundays. We immediately said that we would work out together a shooting schedule not including Sunday," Swart recalls of the locals' response. The villagers were 'absolutely thrilled' to have Nolan shooting the movie in their backyard and did everything they could

to help the production. Some were employed as extras, and the local mayor gave the project his blessing.

For Swart, working on a Hollywood movie was a revealing and exhilarating experience. This was the 'biggest production ever on Dutch soil', a far more expensive and ambitious undertaking even than Paul Verhoeven's wartime film *Black Book*. Swart points to the sheer scope of the film. The Dutch producer also marvelled at director/producer Nolan's control of every part of the filmmaking process and at his attention to detail. Whether it was using a remotely controlled airplane or preparing the set for the use of the bulky IMAX cameras, no detail was ignored. "All those little things, they make a huge difference." This may have been a film with a budget of \$100+ million but there was very little wastage or inefficiency. The producers kept a very tight rein on all the costs.

The Dutch producer was startled by the painstaking attention the *Dunkirk* execs paid to marketing, even from the very earliest stages. They kept news about the film very close to their chest but knew just when to release information to the media to create the maximum impact. "Everything is controlled, from the very first to the very last sentence. It might be a little too far for Dutch standards, but it clearly worked very well!"

Yes, the teenage girls came in their numbers to Urk, hoping to catch a

glimpse of boy band star Harry Styles, who has a role in the film. "There were a lot of girls in campers," Swart recalls. Some came from as far afield as Germany. However, the production base was well guarded and they were never able to get too close to Styles.

The Americans were very happy with the work of their Dutch partners. Swart and his colleagues weren't just helping with the day-to-day shooting. They had to file all the documents to qualify the film for the rebate and arrange permits on all levels. "It was a hefty and lengthy process," Swart states.

International audiences watching *Dunkirk* may not realise that a large part of the location work was done in The Netherlands. Nonetheless, Swart insists that the Dutch are 'getting noticed' internationally and that Nolan's film can only help encourage other projects to come to The Netherlands.

As for his own work, Swart has plenty of other projects. He co-produced Michaël R. Roskam's new gangster film *Racer And the Jailbird*, premiering at the autumn festivals, and he has enjoyed a cult hit with comedy *Ron Goossens, Low Budget Stuntman*. The future slate includes arthouse features like *A Shining Flaw*, a film from renowned photographer Erwin Olaf, and a new feature from Alejandro Agresti. But, no, it is hardly a surprise that none will have quite the 'scope or scale of *Dunkirk*.'

*Margiela's fashion output was mad, dazzling and unimaginably inventive*



**Director & script:** Menna Laura Meijer  
**Production:** mint film office  
As of October 2017 in Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam

# First among equals

***We Margiela*, screening at the world famous Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Oct 22, tells the story of radical Belgian fashion house, Maison Martin Margiela. Nick Cunningham reports.**

According to one character in mint film office's *We Margiela*, the story of the eponymous *maison de couture* is one that has never been told before. This film is bound to assume a defining status, he therefore acknowledges.

One senses that he is not wrong. *We Margiela* is, in equal measure, serious, playful, artistic and intelligent, and is shot through with an avant-garde aesthetic. What's more, it is testament to Rotterdam-based doc house mint film office, whose staff speak as a collective as they acknowledge how the process of creation is a selfless and collaborative one. "Our main interest [in making this film] was the whole notion of a shared creative process and group dynamics within creative communities," the company manifesto states. The film's director Menna Laura Meijer (*Kyteman*, *Now What*; 69, *Love, Sex, Senior*) was merely first among equals.

The Margiela label was founded by Martin and the highly entrepreneurial Jenny Meirens in 1989. He controlled the output, she was the business brains. He was brilliant and maverick, but also kind and inspirational. She was savvy, innovative and intuitive. But they both valued their privacy. He detested the press writing about

anything other than the company's designs, and turned himself into a recluse. The only published picture of him is a snapshot taken through a car window. Even the celebrated Annie Liebowitz had to shoot an empty chair for the company portrait. When a staff member one day observed a stranger hovering the office floor, it was only later he discovered that the mystery cleaner was in fact his esteemed boss.

Equally, Meirens (who died in July 2017) was not one given to self-promotion and her contribution to *We Margiela* is purely verbal, her voice always accompanied by a blank screen. "White is a screen on which people project themselves a lot," she tells the filmmakers at the beginning.

Between 1989 and 2002 (when the company went public – the event which heralded Meirens' departure) Margiela's fashion output was mad, dazzling and unimaginably inventive. Leather boots had sewn-in partitions for toes, humble duvets were transformed into couture coats and cotton socks were spliced, joined and turned into delicately cut blouses. "If there is one who is a master in turning something cheap into something class, it is Martin," stresses Meirens.

For Margiela, street corners became catwalks, as did the roughest of schools (replete with curious and chaotic kids). Sometimes the press were sidelined, as when fashion launches were held in retail situ within the fashion emporia of London's Fulham Road or the high streets of

Paris or Tokyo. The Margiela models may have been beautiful but their faces were often covered, so as not to distract from the clothes. For the Boijmans exhibition of Maison Margiela the garments were hung outside the museum's windows, facing inwards like couture wraiths. What's more, the Margiela clothes labels were the last word in minimalist, blank and attached by four simple stitches, each piece of needlepoint visible through the material.

Like their mint film office counterparts, many staff members at Margiela shared the concept of the collective 'we', at least when the company was young and idealistic and the world seemed blissful. It is left to the company's highly articulate, and somewhat cynical, head of press to put us straight: "the 'we'," he says, "existed on one floor of a house that had a creative director on the top floor". (Likewise, the mint film office manifesto urges caution for the naive: "Though we understand the longing to work in a group, we are wary about how much this is a romantic notion, an economic solution and whether a creative process can be democratic at all.")

The film ends in crackly silence, echoing Meirens' departure from the business premises on her last day as owner. So the last word on the Margiela legacy must go to Lise, the company's head of artisan design, who helped develop the company's concept of flea market chic. "Martin had the finger of God," she says. "For him it was easy. He knew."



*This powerhouse, emotional actress had a lightness that Van Heusden observed in many flight attendants*

Photo: IJswater-Films

**Director:** Jaap van Heusden **Script:** Jan-Willem den Bok, Jaap van Heusden  
**Production:** IJswater Films (NL)  
**Co-Production:** Caviar (BE), NTR (NL), Strada Films (RO)

# Under her wing



Jaap van Heusden

**Geoffrey Macnab talks to Jaap van Heusden, whose *In Blue* opens the Films By The Sea.**

*In Blue* is the story of a flight attendant – Lin, immensely capable and calm under pressure – who strikes up an unlikely friendship with an impoverished but street-smart teenage street kid she meets in bizarre circumstances in Bucharest after her taxi knocks him over. Jaap van Heusden co-wrote the screenplay with Jan Willem den Bok. Both racked up thousands of air miles in the process, the director points out.

Den Bok came up with the idea of making the lead character a flight attendant. He had been making docs for TV that had required him (as van Heusden puts it) to “fly from one poor country to the next, making these reports and spending a lot of time with these young boys who survived on the street, first in Brazil and then in Ukraine.”

In the film (Film Fund selective funding/Production Incentive support) Lin becomes involved in the life of the kid. She feels guilty about his injuries and takes on an almost maternal role in his life.

Her sympathy for him is obvious but she is always able to fly back west whenever matters become too uncomfortable. “The other player in this relationship doesn’t have this freedom or privilege. He is just stuck and needs to wait until she pops up,” the director says of the boy. Nevertheless there is an ambiguous sexual tension between the two characters, the reason for which is suggested before the film’s end.

Van Heusden admits to a fascination with flight attendants. “If you go by train, the air hostesses from KLM are already wearing their uniforms going to work. On all the trains going to the airport, you see these very neatly dressed flight attendants in their blue uniforms. It is very attractive as a kind of theatre performance.”

During the research, the director and screenwriter met lots of flight attendants. They were very impressed their tact, empathy and powers of communication. “They are very sensitive to all the unsaid things. They find it very easy to make contact. They’re not afraid of people at all. If there is an obnoxious man who is twice their weight, they have to be able to control him – in the air. They have nothing other than their social skills with which to do it.”

Van Heusden had a vision of a type of woman who was confident, outgoing, but not so intellectual. In the film, though, Lin is confronted with a situation that she can’t just sweep away and forget once a flight is over.

At first, Van Heusden felt that actress Maria Kraakman would be too intense to play the flight attendant. She is very well-known and has worked with some of The Netherlands’ leading art house directors, Nanouk Leopold and Alex van Warmerdam among them. To Van Heusden’s delight this ‘powerhouse, emotional’ actress turned out to be both funny and social, and had a ‘lightness’ that he observed in many flight attendants.

Bogdan Iancu, the teenager who plays the boy, was found in Bucharest. “The quality of the actors who came in was just shockingly good, really, really good,” the director says of the Romanian casting calls. Bogdan, an experienced child actor, wasn’t from as tough a background as the boy he was playing. “For him to read the script was absolutely shocking,” the director recalls. He didn’t realise that there were streets kids living in such poverty just yards away from where he went to school every day. “It was a world which even to him was very new.”

One of the film’s key themes is the ever widening gap that exists between citizens in the privileged west and those living in far more oppressive circumstances in the east. The early plan had been to shoot in Kiev but the filmmakers decided to move the production to Romania. Why? “No-one wanted to insure it,” the director says of the civil war brewing in Ukraine. “Also, we realised the very violent situation would get in the way of the story.”



# Boarding cargo



Photo: Bas Boogaerts

Gilles Coulier

**For Dutch production house Halal, the co-production of *Cargo* was both a pleasure and an eye-opening experience. Now the film world-premieres in San Sebastian. Company chief Gijs Kerbosch talks to Nick Cunningham.**

The way Gijs Kerbosch tells it, it all sounds so easy. At the end of a long day pitching co-pro at Berlin 2015 he met up with his mate Sam de Jong in the bar. Sam's feature *Prince*, produced by Kerbosch, had been very well received and he was sharing a drink with a Belgian director, Gilles Coulier, who was also in Berlin on pitch duty. Kerbosch takes up the tale.

"Gilles was very clever and very smart and we talked a lot about films and personal stuff... sometimes you have a natural click with someone on a friendship level," he remembers. So as not to break the spell, what the pair pointedly refused to do was talk about Coulier's debut feature project *Cargo*. That would come later that evening when producers Gilles de Schryver and Wouter Sap of De Wereldvrede would join them.

When the Belgian duo eventually pitched their tale of a seafaring patriarch and his three feuding sons, all set on a fishing boat on the North Sea, Kerbosch was hooked. "I was intrigued by the specific cultural world of Ostend that they presented, and then after Berlin they sent me the script and I really loved it. I am a slow reader but this time I learned that if it doesn't take so much time to read – if the story just grabs you – then it is a good sign it is the right script. But I think we had already decided that first evening."

In *Cargo*, after tragedy besets the elderly Leon on the high seas, a series of dramatic aftershocks turns the world of his three sons upside down, and they find themselves on the road to criminality, marital strife and financial ruin.

For the co-pro partners the cross-border accord didn't end at the Berlinale. Kerbosch went onto the set in Belgium where he was deeply impressed by Coulier's *modus operandi*. "What I found really interesting was how he was so into directing some of Flanders' most revered actors in such a great and detailed way."

"And the production was super relaxed too," the Halal founder continues. "Everybody was making jokes, but the moment the First AD said we had to prepare for the next shot, then we had to be super focused. But whenever there was the opportunity again to make a joke, there was another joke. It was

really funny to see how they worked. I was fascinated to see how other producers and crew work on set."

The Dutch technical contribution to the film, which received €200k minority support from the Netherlands Film Fund, included sound design by Vincent Sinceretti, who also worked on Sam de Jong's *Prince*. Part of the film was edited

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*"If it doesn't take so much time to read, it is a sign it is the right script"*

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in The Netherlands and make-up was applied by a team headed by the Dutch Eva Lotte Oosterop. This entailed the daily drawing of complex tattoos on the bodies of the sea-faring men.

Despite its burgeoning reputation, Halal hasn't been particularly active in terms of territory-by-territory subsidized co-production. (In the past the company has invested its own money or, in the case of *Prince*, collaborated with the digital media powerhouse VICE Media). But, says Kerbosch, that is all set to change. "We are working on a couple of films at the moment. One is set in Iceland – I think it is a good idea to co-produce with a Scandinavian country. And I also hope that we will co-produce with De Wereldvrede again in Belgium. Is co-production my preferred way of financing? Definitely, as it was such a great experience on *Cargo*."



**Director:** Gilles Coulier **Script:** Gilles Coulier, Tom Dupont **Production:** De Wereldvrede (BE) **Co-Production:** Halal (NL), Chevaldeuxtrois (BE/FR) **Sales:** Wide

# Lighting up Locarno

**The Locarno International Film Festival underlined once more this year its keen interest in films from The Netherlands with the selection of three feature (co)productions and a Dutch short. Nick Cunningham reports.**

When fledgling director Stefanie Kolk presented her debut (graduation) film *Clan* at Locarno 2016, she must have made quite an impression. When, earlier this year, the festival's programmers learned about her second film *Harbour*, about two immigrant working as industrial painters on the Rotterdam waterfront, they programmed the film (based on the picture edit) in the festival's Pardi di Domani international short film competition. In the work, supported by The Netherlands Film Fund, the two men alone must decide what to do when they see a body floating in the water.

"People from all over the world work at the enormous Rotterdam harbour – one of the biggest ports in Europe – it's like a country where everybody is at home yet where nobody actually lives," Kolk stresses. "There are many other people in the harbour that are probably in a much better position to deal with this problem [of the dead body] than they are. Of course, we see this irony at play on a large scale, too. Countries that have the most problems of their own always seem to be the ones that have to take responsibility," she adds.

Gürcan Keltok's feature documentary *Meteors (Meteorlar)* world-premiered

in Locarno (Filmmakers of the Present) to great acclaim winning the Swatch Art Peace Hotel Award. Programmer Lorenzo Esposito declared it to be, "the most powerful debut in Turkish cinema in recent years. Keltok films with a rare metaphysical precision, brilliantly sliding the real event onto a plane of total filmic reinvention and leading the very concept of documentary to a point of no return." In the film the invasion by the Turkish army into the country's Kurdish region is accompanied by a hail of meteorites which lights up the night sky, sending the people pouring onto the streets.

The film was executive produced by Marc van Goethem and co-financed with director Keltok. "Gürcan has been a close friend of mine for more than 10 years and we were always discussing forming an independent company focusing on documentary and experimental film," says Van Goethem. "I was involved in his previous film *Colony* in 2015 which screened at more than 40 festivals and won Best Newcomer Award at Dokufest."

Also in Filmmakers of the Present was Shevaun Mizrahi's *Distant Costellation*, co-produced by Shelly Grizim and the Dutch Deniz Buga. All three were classmates on the NYU Graduate Film Programme. At the Locarno closing ceremony the film received a Special Mention. "*Distant Costellation* takes place in a retirement home in Istanbul where mostly old Istanbulites with Greek,

French, Jewish and Armenian background reside," Buga comments. "I find the film particularly important since thematically it brings to the screen the experience of being an elderly minority in the context of contemporary Istanbul, and how that experience differs from the majoritarian experience. And on a formal level, the film bends the horizons of documentary filmmaking."

Sanjeeva Pushpakumara's *Davena Vihagun (Burning Birds)*, about a woman who goes to desperate lengths to save her family, has been selected for a raft of festivals since its world premiere at the Busan in October 2016. The film received IFFR Hubert Bals Fund (HBF) support in 2015 and won the Special Jury Prize (the second prize) of 17<sup>th</sup> Tokyo FILMeX International Film Festival.

Dutch-Afghani Dawood Hilmandi's *Badeszenen* won top prize of €36,000 at the Open Doors co-pro forum. A magical realist tale, the film is produced by Mohamed Husain Naikzad at Bamiyan Film Production, with offices in Afghanistan and Amsterdam. It follows Yoro, a motherless 12-year-old who serves his father's two new wives. "In my works, I want to share moments from a world of deep sorrow and deep happiness, and nothing in-between," said Hilmandi. "Locarno truly opened the 'door' to a world full of beautiful possibilities in which I can start to share my cinematic world."

Film Festival Locarno  
Selections from The Netherlands



*"The most powerful debut in Turkish cinema in recent years"*

**Meteors** ◊ Director & script: Gürcan Keltok Production: 29P Films (NL) Sales: Heretic Outreach



*“Art, film and new technology, and lots of kids enjoying themselves while learning”*

# New kid on the block



Floor van Spaendonck

**It's one of the longest running and prestigious international festivals for kids. Now, it has a new head, Floor van Spaendonck. Geoffrey Macnab reports.**

Floor van Spaendonck took over as the new director of the Cinekid Foundation in February and will be at the helm of Cinekid for this year's edition (October 14-27). She may have replaced the formidable Sannette Naeyé, who ran the event for two decades, but she doesn't seem abashed in the slightest by the challenges that lie ahead.

So, how does she follow Sanette? One answer is that Van Spaendonck, formerly Head of Policy and International Affairs at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, has restructured the curatorial team. She talks of 'conducting a balanced program with the determined voice from the heads of film, TV and new media, rather than taking one of the programmers seats herself'. She also wants to bring more coherence to a festival which had grown and grown in size since it was launched in 1986. She refers to the 'island structure' that some delegates have encountered when visiting Cinekid.

Van Spaendonck is used to innovating. From 2008-2012, she was the director of the Virtueel Platform, the Amsterdam-based e-culture knowledge institute. Here, she was dealing with artists, filmmakers, theatre practitioners, architects, fashion designers and young turks from the gaming world, trying to bring them together and encouraging them to embrace the brave new digital world. The idea was to encourage artists not to 'consider new digital technology as a threat but to embrace it as an opportunity'. During this period, she was a regular attendee at Cinekid's much vaunted Medialab, where the key ingredients are art, film and new technology, and lots of kids enjoying themselves while learning.

"As a visitor, I had a great love for Cinekid and a great admiration for the work that Sanette has done," the new director says. Aside from the rich selection of new children's movies she points to the programmes for professionals and the excellent industry seminars staged at the festival, attended by both filmmakers and academics. She is delighted now to have the opportunity to help the event 'take the next step'.

Under Van Spaendonck, Cinekid will spread its wings yet further. The festival won't be confined to Amsterdam. Starting with the national opening in Nijmegen, this year's Cinekid On Tour will have a truly national footprint. There will be screenings all across the country, everywhere from Rotterdam to

Maastricht as well as within Amsterdam itself. The kids won't just be watching films passively but will be 'makers' too, participating in every part of the festival.

Another change is that Van Spaendonck and her team are seeing more films than ever. They've watched over 700 titles this year, up from around 400 that their predecessors used to watch and choose from. "The balance comes almost naturally," she says of the Dutch-facing side of the festival and its international dimension. The Dutch family film competition is one of the mainstays of the festival programme. It provides international visitors with the chance to see local fare. At the same time, the Best Children's Film Comp allows Dutch audiences to see kids' movies they would almost certainly otherwise have missed.

One change that Sannette Naeyé achieved before she left Cinekid was to re-locate the event within the Ministry of Culture. This means that it gets its state funding directly from government (rather than via The Netherlands Film Fund) and that it has the same status as the other major Dutch festivals, IFFR, IDFA and The Netherlands Film Festival.

The festival expects to attract around 60,000 young visitors, a very healthy number. Van Spaendonck, who is on a multiple year contract, has been in the job for just over 6 months. That's not long but what is clear is that she is already putting her stamp on the event.

# Kindred spirits



**This Autumn sees an exhibition at EYE of the sensory and dreamlike works of two prominent international film artists, Apichatpong Weerasethakul from Thailand and the Brazilian Cao Guimarães.**

Guimarães and Weerasethakul are kindred artistic spirits who take the mundane reality around them as the starting point for their work, but it requires their exceptional taste and highly attuned sense of aesthetic to reveal its beauty, colours, rhythms, light, sounds and smells.

The decision to couple both artists within the same EYE exhibition meets very much with the approval of each. "I think there are some similar elements in our way of looking at the world, especially trying to extract poetry from the ordinary things," comments Guimarães. "We are both from countries with a powerful popular culture, where people have a kind of special relationship with their bodies, let's say a natural sensuality,

which is in a way expressed in our work. Also we both work at the borders of the cinema world and the art world."

Weerasethakul responds in kind. "I don't know what Cao will exhibit but I am a great admirer of his work. I first saw his work about a man who lives alone in a cave for a film program that I co-curated. I have an affinity with anything cave-related." The film was *The Soul of the Bone* (2004), which will be included within the exhibition.

The exhibition space at EYE is beautiful, angular and challenging, and perfectly suited to the work of these filmmakers who offer a parallax view of the quotidian world.

The work of Cao Guimarães is situated at the interface between cinema and art. Self-taught, he pays little heed to prevailing conventions and predictable forms of film-making. Although documentary by nature, his images float between familiar reality and a world in which the senses enjoy free reign and – just as in the work of Weerasethakul – break free from rational considerations. In that way, Guimarães' images evoke a world that blends dream, sensual experience and reality.

"I will show eight or nine videos installed in the exhibition space. They are from different periods of my career and will be shown as a projection and also in monitors," Guimarães confirms. "There will be

screenings of all my nine feature films in the museum's film theatre during the whole exhibition period."

Most of Weerasethakul's films, photographs, experimental videos and film installations are set in the north-east of Thailand, where he grew up. Weerasethakul is interested in the history, memory and sensory experience of this region. In his world there is no distinction between present and past, between visible reality and dreamed truth. Many of his works feature 'spirits' – ancestors, wood nymphs, figures from ancient legends or mythical stories. The seemingly casual way they form part of his filmed reality shows that, for Weerasethakul, they are not strangers but simply part of life. The Thai master won a Palme d'Or in Cannes in 2010 for *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*.

Both filmmakers have enjoyed close relationships with the Dutch film industry. While Guimarães was selected three times for IFFR and once for IDFA, Weerasethakul's international career started at Rotterdam after the selection of *Mysterious Object at Noon* in 2000.

"I am blessed to have had support from the Hubert Bals Fund over the years," Weerasethakul stresses. "In fact the HBF has become quite a model in our region when discussing Cinema, cultural support and investment. I am very glad to have had such a long relationship."

◊ EYE Exhibition:

16 Sept – 3 Dec 2017

Locus: Apichatpong Weerasethakul – Cao Guimarães



Courtesy the artist and Kick the Machine Films, Bangkok

*Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* ◊ Apichatpong Weerasethakul



## Rifka Lodeizen

Rifka is one of The Netherlands' most versatile and enigmatic actors, and the owner of a face upon which every nuanced cinematic moment can be read.

After her Best Actress Golden Calf nomination for Eddy Terstall's *Simon* in 2004, she picked up the award itself

in 2009 for her brilliant portrayal of Marieke in Esther Rots' *Can Go Through Skin*.

In 2016 she played the lead in Paula van der Oest's *Tonio*, the Dutch submission for the Academy Awards. In 2017 she stars in two Toronto selections, *Disappearance* by Boudewijn Koole and

Marleen Jonkman's *Messi and Maud*. Declares Rifka: "The characters I play are in heavy situations. What if you know you are dying? What if your child dies. What if you can't get children. I try to shift into the characters and their situation but also to give space for my own impulses and emotions."